while in 2007 it was slightly higher at £15,702.

The Rev William Ruddle, lead chaplain at Basildon Hospital, said the trust has a legal obligation to meet the cost of funeral services in some circumstances when a patient dies at the hospital.

He said: "We have a duty under common law to arrange and pay for the funerals for some individuals, who do not have family or friends to ensure they are laid to rest with dignity and

"It happens very rarely."

Funerals paid for by the hospital are low key affairs.

The average £800 price of a funeral or cremation paid for by the hospital includes a basic pine casket, a hearse, pallbearers and a 20-minute funeral service.

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in somercotes, Lamuon.

But the devastated 31-year-old. who did not want to be named, believes she was targeted by thieves who knew the value of her dogs.

She thinks the crooks were watching her home as the dogs were stolen during a two-hour window when she popped out.

She said: "I am absolutely devastated.

"I had only gone for about 90 minutes and the dogs must have been down from the garden wall."

The woman's two-year-old French Bulldog bitch had given birth to a litter of nine pups just 16 weeks before.

Four of the dogs had already been sold, but the other five were waiting to be found new homes.

They stole the puppies which included two black brindle males. one brindle female and two black male pups with white chests.

cross breeds. If the thieves can't sell them then who knows what will happen to them."

The burglars got into the house after climbing over a garden fence and forcing the door to an extension of the house where the dogs were

Witnesses to the break-in, which happened between 9.10pm and 11pm on Saturday, can contact police on

0300 3334444

PEACE ACTIVIST MEETS DALE FARM TRAVELLERS



■ Support - Rajagopal talks to Ann Kobayashi from Our Lady of Good Counsel Church and traveller Maryanne McCarthy Picture: PAUL WATSON BA34464 02

A PEACE activist from India paid a visit to Dale Farm in Cravs Hill to meet travellers facing eviction.

Rajagopal from New Delhi, was at the illegal site to talk to families who have been told to leave by Basildon Council.

Rajagopal is the vice chairman of the **Gandhi Peace** Foundation in India which campaigns for the rights of poor and is inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

here feels very strongly about this."

Elsewhere the Vange Community Group has collected more than 1,000 signatures to save the playing field in Kent View Road, Vange.

Karen Jacobs, a committee member said: "There's precious little green space in Vange as it is, so to take away this site would be madness."

Residents campaigning against plans to sell a field next to Northlands Park in Pitsea, have collected more than 500 signatures on their petition.

The council originally approved the decision to sell off the plots for housing in autumn last year.

Malcolm Buckley, Basildon councillor for the environment, said: "Only a portion of the sites would be developed.

'Gloucester Park's swimming pool is in dire straits and would have to close with or without the sporting village.

"We are asking families if they are willing to give up some land in order to keep a swimming pool in the district. as well as other facilities in the sporting village."

> **SPORTING VILLAGE'S** TRUE COST: P10-11

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